District Boards having their own Engineering Establishment.

READ—

Government Order No. L. 4972-91—L. B. 83-30-40, dated 10th December 1930, appointing a Committee to consider the question of the District Boards being permitted to have their own Engineering Establishment and to submit its views to Government.

2. Letter No. 5311, dated 7th November 1931, from the Chief Engineer, Public Works Department, submitting the report of the Committee.

No. L. 7570-86—L. B. 83-30-51, DATED BANGALORE, THE 11TH MAY 1932.

During the October Session of the Representative Assembly in 1930, a resolution was moved by Mr. H. B. Gundappagowda, that the District Boards might be allowed to have their own Engineering Establishments, and it was suggested that a small Committee might be constituted to examine the whole question and submit recommendations. Government accordingly appointed a Committee constituted as follows:—

Chairman	..	Chief Engineer, Public Works Department.
Members	..	Superintending Engineer, Shimoga Circle. Deputy Commissioner, Hassan District. Do do Kolar District. Mr. H. B. Gundappagowda, B.A., B.L. Mr. B. S. Puttaswami, B.A., B.L.

The Committee held for meetings and submitted their report to Government in November 1931.

The main complaints of the District Boards about the existing system are summarised below:—

(*i*) The District Boards are not able to make out how the money transferred by them to the Public Works Department on account of District Board Works is spent, and they have also no voice in checking the figures or scrutinising the work done, though the works are financed by them.

(*ii*) The Public Works Department does not pay as much attention to District Board Works as to State Fund Works.

(*iii*) The District Boards could supervise their own works more efficiently, and

(*iv*) Get them done more expeditiously and economically.

3. After considering all these points, the Committee have made the following observations in regard to them:—

(*i*) In regard to point (*i*), they observe that Government have, in their Order No. L. 4447-66—L. B. 99-22-1, dated 16th December 1922, directed that the estimates for all District Board Works to be carried out by the Public Works Department should be sent to the District Board Presidents for countersignature in token of approval, and that after the estimates have been sanctioned by competent authority, copies of abstracts of the estimates should be furnished to the Presidents for reference. A statement of monthly expenditure on each work is also required to be sent to the Presidents to keep them informed of the progress made.

(*ii*) The second complaint, the Committee observe, is of too sweeping a nature, and cannot be substantiated.

(*iii*) As regards the third contention, namely, that the District Boards could supervise their works more efficiently than the Public Works Department, the Committee point out that the works would then lose the benefit of supervision by the higher Officers of the Department and would have to be executed entirely by comparatively Junior Officers. The alternative suggestion that the higher Officers might, when required, inspect the works and give their opinion would hardly serve the purpose, unless they were vested with direct responsibility.

(*iv*) Nor is the last contention accepted by the Committee, who state that if delays occur in the execution of Public Works, they are invariably due to the observance of certain codal rules in regard to the selection of sites or the acquisition of land or the recovery of the quota due from local bodies. While it might be quite possible, if works were carried out by the District Boards under the proposed arrangement, to avoid delays to some extent in these matters, there could be no appreciable improvement in other respects unless the District Boards were to dispense with such necessary formalities and safeguards as calling for tenders and paying bills after check and audit.

That the District Boards could manage works more economically cannot also be admitted, as the establishment charges alone would be about 60 to 100 per cent more than what the District Boards are incurring at present.

4. The question of the Establishment of a separate Engineering Establishment by the District Boards was fully discussed by the Committee. As such an arrangement

would result in an increase in the establishment charges which would have to be borne by the District Boards, various schemes were considered, inclusive of those suggested by the non-official members, with a view to keeping down the expenditure on establishments as much as possible without detriment to efficiency. It was found that while the schemes proposed by the technical members of the Committee were considered too costly by the non-official members, those proposed by the latter could not also be adopted as there were great difficulties, both technical and administrative, in giving effect to them. In view, however, of the representations made on the subject from time to time and the opinion of the non-official members of the Committee that nothing short of the complete transfer of the establishment to the control of the District Boards would be satisfactory, the Committee have recommended that this arrangement may be tried in the Mysore District, and that for this purpose a separate Engineering Establishment costing Rs. 30,200 per year may be sanctioned for a period of three years.

5. Government sympathise with the desire of the District Boards to manage their own Public Works and would have no objection in principle to this, provided they were satisfied that there would be no material increase of cost of the District Boards by this arrangement, and that the execution of works would be satisfactory. The scale of establishment proposed by the Committee for the trial of the scheme in the Mysore District would not, in the opinion of Government, be adequate to secure the satisfactory execution of works. Having regard to the fact that the Public Works Budget of the District Board is only about Rs. 1,00,000, even this scale means that expenditure on establishment would go up from 17½ to 30 per cent. With an adequate establishment such as would, in the opinion of Government, sufficiently safeguard the Board's interests, the percentage of cost would amount up to about 40.

6. In these circumstances, Government consider that it would not be a proper application of public funds to run duplicate establishments at a heavy cost for attending to work that is being done by the State Public Works Department at present, and that it would not be expedient to try the scheme even as an experimental measure in one district as proposed by the Committee.

The existing arrangements will therefore continue, but the officers of the Public Works Department will be instructed to give fullest possible information to the District Boards in regard to District Fund Works, as contemplated in the order referred to in para 3 (i) *supra*.

H. V. RAMASVAMI,
Offg. *Secretary to Government,*
General Department.